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ABSTRACT

A "Speech Showcase," such as the one instituted over the past 5 years at Del Mar College (Texas), gives students enrolled in basic public speaking courses the opportunity to perform before a large audience and thereby gain experience and recognition. The faculty facilitator sets up the event logistically and advertises the event. Student speakers are selected by instructors, sometimes representing the "most improved" speakers, but more often representing the "best speaker" from their classes. Students also volunteer to usher, run video equipment, and to act as masters of ceremonies. Student attendance is encouraged by awarding bonus points, and reaction to the program has been favorable. Finally, the speech department benefits from the activity by increasing public awareness, which can result in increased enrollments in speech courses. (HB)

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IMPLEMENTING THE SPEECH SHOWCASE TO ENCOURAGE AND DISPLAY DIVERSITY IN A SPEECH COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

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THE SPEECH SHOWCASE

The Speech Showcase at Del Mar College, Corpus Christi has been a feature of the Speech Communication department for around five years; it is held the last week of classes during Fall and Spring semesters. The goal of the Speech Showcase is to give students enrolled in our basic public speaking course an opportunity to perform before a new and larger audience and thereby gain experience in applying their newly acquired skills, give them recognition for their achievements in the course, and to display to the college and community the importance and utility of the Fundamentals of Public Speaking course. I want to explain to you the role of the faculty facilitator, the role of the students involved, and the benefits the department receives from this event.

The role of facilitator is rotated among the full-time faculty members, so the showcase does not become the boon or bane of one person. The facilitator determines the date and time of the showcase in consultation with other faculty members; after the time is set, the next step is to call around campus to find a room or auditorium that will seat two hundred people. Once time and place are set, the facilitator prepares a memo to the speech faculty; this memo announces the above information and allots to all of the teachers, full and part-time, the number of student speakers they can choose for the showcase. The number varies according to the number of sections taught: A full-time instructor with five classes will, for instance, be allowed three students, while an adjunct instructor with only two classes will be alloted one speaker. The total number of

speakers in the showcase is limited to eleven in order to keep the length of the program to around an hour and a half. The memo also gives a deadline for giving the student speaker's name, title of the speech, and signed release granting permission to the department to videotape the showcase and to use the showcase videotape in whatever manner the department chooses. Next, the facilitator schedules necessary audio-visual equipment for the room: Items include microphone and amplifier, podium, table, chalkboard, overhead projector, and camcorder to videotape the proceedings. The facilitator will also need to develop promotional material announcing the showcase. This task is accomplished with the help of the college relations department, which will design and duplicate flyers and programs. The campus newspaper and the weekly bulletin are notified also. The final duty of the facilitator is to select the student master of ceremonies. By using a student MC, another student is given the opportunity to develop as a public speaker. After all of these duties are attended to, the facilitator can sit back and wait for the time to arrive.

The role of the student speakers in the showcase is pretty clear cut; however, the criteria for selecting them is somewhat vague. Some instructors believe that the "most improved" speakers from their classes should be spotlighted in the showcase, while a larger body of instructors bases their choices on who is "the best speaker" in the classes. The later criterion certainly makes a more interesting showcase, since the speakers chosen are usually talented and entertaining individuals. The students are asked to present one of their speeches they have previously given in class. Most speeches are informative and last around six to eight minutes. The

student speakers are encouraged to invite family and friends to come and watch them perform. Students are also asked to participate as master of ceremonies, camcorder operators, and ushers. To encourage attendance many instructors award bonus points to class members who will come and validate their attendance by signing an attendance sheet or turning in written critiques of the speeches they heard. After the showcase, students who attended often offer positive comments about the quality of the speakers, the large audience, etc. They appear to enjoy this occasion and the main reason probably is the high visibility of other students: The showcase presentation is of the students, by the students, and for the students.

The speech department is benefited in several ways by this activity. Our enrollment is increased by giving the student body a chance to see how a speech course can enhance their public speaking skills. The administration is made aware of our progam and the speech department, since the president is asked to sign certificates of recognition, which are presented to each of the participants. The speech instructors benefit also by having a videotape record of each showcase to use as a teaching tool. Individual instructors also profit from having the opportunity for working one-on-one with student speakers in preparation for the showcase; furthermore, the instructors have an chance to view their student's skills and progress outside the classroom.

The Speech Showcase is really a great public relations vehicle for the department, since all of the direct (student speakers) and indirect participants (family, friends, and other audience members) value the experience. The concept of a speech showcase could be adapted to fit in other colleges, and this activity could enhance any department's stature in their institution. The speech faculty members, the student speakers, the audience, and the speech department itself all benefit from the Speech Showcase.